

OBITUARIES

FATHER ALBERT DREAN, OMI (1909-1967)

Eternal rest came very suddenly to a much respected and beloved member of the Oblate Order with the passing of Rev. Father Albert Drean on May 26th, while he was gathered with the children that he loved and had taken to Whitehorse to see H.R.H. Princess Alexandra and Brothers and Priests of the Order in the recreation room of the hostel. The vacancy left with the death of Father Drean will be a challenge to fill as he had spent over thirty years as an Oblate Missionary in the Yukon.

Father Drean, was born in Brittany, France and ordained at the Oblate Seminary at Liege, Belgium in 1934. He came to the Prince Rupert Vicarate in Canada in 1935, where he remained for a year, coming to Lower Post by way of Alaska and over the pioneer trails that existed in the Yukon at that time. Father Drean remained at the Lower Post Mission until 1938, when he left to start a mission at Teslin. He was the first missionary to settle in Teslin, where he arrived by dog team and lived in a tent for two years, while the church and rectory were being hewn out of the forest. Many stories are told of his good works among the native population and surrounding area, during his tenure, which lasted until 1953, when he again was sent to Lower Post. Shortly after his return he was appointed Vicar Provincial of the Oblate Order for the Whitehorse Vicarate, with headquarters in Teslin, which is more central, since this post requires much travelling among the various missions in the Yukon. Father Drean held this position for nine years and then was only

retired for health reasons. In 1962, while on furlough at his home in France, he had a heart seizure, which forced him to slow his activities in his mission work. In July of 1966, he returned to the Mission in Lower Post, where he was residing at the time of his death.

Father Drean was laid to rest in Whitehorse Cemetery with the late Bishop Coudert and other Oblate brothers. Funeral service was held at the Sacred Heart Cathedral with eleven priests taking part in the concelebrated mass, Bishop Mulvihill, being the principal celebrant. Concelebrated Mass was said at Lower Post with six priests partaking and Father Poulet being the principal celebrant. Mass was also held at Teslin in memory of Father Drean.

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FUNERAL ORATION OF FR. A. MONNET, OMI

We have gathered this morning to honor the mortal remains of another Priest of God, another Ambassador of Christ who gave all his talents, energies and 32 years of his priestly life to the work of the Church in this vast Territory.

Father Albert Drean was born in Brittany, France June 23, 1909 in one of those good christian families which consider it an honor to give one or two of their children to be Priests or Religious. — When he heard the Call Albert chose the Congregation of the O.M.I. because he wanted to be a missionary Priest in a Society dedicated to Mary Immaculate. After long years of study, six of them in Liege, Bel-

gium he was ordained a Priest in that last city in 1934. The following year, 1935, he was assigned to this Vicariate, then called the Vicariate of Yukon and Prince Rupert.

For nearly two years he worked in Hazelton, B. C. under the direction of an older missionary. Afterwards he was given a new assignment in the most northern part of B. C. On Pentecost Sunday 1937 he left Prince Rupert for Lower Post. At the time this was not precisely a pleasure trip, especially from Wrangel (Alaska) to his final destination, Lower Post. But he thought nothing of it. He was young and he had enthusiasm; he had in his heart the fire of love: the love of God and of souls. Upon arrival at Lower Post he planted his tent and then set out to build the Mission. Assisted by a very able companion he managed to build both at the same time the material and spiritual edifice.

The task was a difficult one; but he faced it with his usual smile, with his gentle approach, with an untiring spirit of dedication.

While the Lower Post Mission was still taking shape he was asked by his Bishop to move on to another field. Without hesitation, prompted only by his spirit of obedience he accepted to go to Teslin. He went by dog-team, taking only scanty supplies and equipment. There he displayed the same qualities as in his previous Mission. For over 12 years he labored unceasingly among the native population of Teslin. Striving with apostolic zeal and fortright decision to provide for his flock according to the mind of Christ and the mind of the founder of the Oblates' Congregation, he kept on preaching the word of God in season and out of season. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians says: « If I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I have become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal » He continues: « Charity is patient, is kind, is not pretentious,

is not ambitious ». One of the secrets of Fr. Drean's success was certainly his spirit of charity, his patience, his kindness for all regardless of race, faith and condition.

In 1953 Fr. Drean was transferred back to Lower Post. During his stay in Teslin he had advanced the Kingdom of God to a remarkable degree: the church and other buildings were there to bear witness to his zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of His people. Despite these accomplishments he accepted to change most willingly because he had kept a sincere and genuine affection for the people of his first mission. For the next four years he was going to give them the best of himself « he fought the good fight of the faith, keeping his mandate without stain, vigilant, laboring in all things, fulfilling his ministry ».

When in 1957 Bishop Coudert asked the General Administration of the Oblates Congregation to appoint a Provincial for his Vicariate, it was Fr. Drean who was chosen to fulfill these functions of Religious Superior of the Oblate Fathers and Brothers of the Vicariate of Whitehorse. Then began for him a new kind of life, a life of long journeys on the Alaska Highway and other roads of the Yukon, journeys to central points outside the Territory in the interest of his subjects including four trips to Rome to attend the General Chapter of the Congregation of the O.M.I.

Fr. Drean assumed his new functions with a great sense of responsibility and conscientiousness. However with simple trust we say that, during his nine years as Provincial he always strove to be — not so much a strict Superior than a Big Brother to all his religious. Seldom did he give directions in word; rather he gave instruction by his examples. His friendly greeting, his heartfelt hospitality, his words of encouragement, his sincere praise still echo in our hearts.

Last year, at the end of his term as a Provincial he humbly entered again the rank and file and accepted gladly the more modest position of missionary in charge of the H. Family Mission at Lower Post. That's where he came from last Sunday night on a special Mission. On Monday night, just about 24 hours after reaching Whitehorse death suddenly took him away from us. However, death didn't take him by surprise. He had a premonition that he would die the way he did. He had told many of his brother Oblates. He was seeing right. But he was ready to meet his Maker.

We have lost a good friend; we have lost a Brother Priest; the diocese has lost a good shepherd. But this friend, — priest, this shepherd still lives — not at an earthly address, but in heaven, in Christ who said « I am the Resurrection and the Life » He remains close to us and no doubt we will feel his action in our life, because like the Little Flower, one of his favorite saints, he « Will spend (his) time in heaven doing good on earth ».

Dear Fr. Drean: with sincerity and affection we offer this tribute to you on this day of separation. In journeyings often, laboring in all things, in disappointments and in victory you have followed the pattern of steadfast dedication to the flock of Christ. Our participation this morning in this sublime Liturgy of thanksgiving, is the symbol of our union with you in everything. It is also the sacred assurance of the prayers which have gone from the heart of every one of us that Our Blessed Lord may give you the imperishable crown of glory, because in truth, you have fought the good fight of the faith, you have fulfilled your pastoral work, you have laid hold on eternal life.